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**Changes in beliefs of a preservice teacher after a teaching
assistantship program: A case study**

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**"Changes in beliefs of a preservice teacher after a teaching
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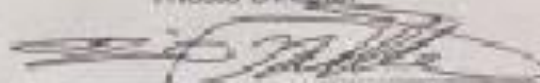
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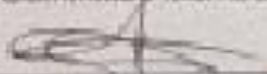
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ABSTRACT

The main intent of this qualitative case study was to discover if the beliefs regarding English language teaching and learning of a 23-year-old preservice teacher would change after experiencing a teaching assistantship program at Universidad Siglo XXI. The study was applied to validate the implementation of the above-mentioned program. In order to confirm its legitimacy, a before and after transition in the subject was paramount; therefore, interviews inquiring about his beliefs were applied at the beginning of the experience and a second at the end. Furthermore, there was also a follow up interview in order to clarify any doubts and confirm any suppositions regarding the participant's responses. Through a thorough analysis of the collected data the outcome showed that his beliefs were not only challenged but also there was a transition from a naïve idea of the teaching profession to a more real panorama of the teaching learning process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

There are different situations novice teachers have to face during the first stages of their professional life. Not only do apprentice teachers have to deal with different academic tasks such as program and materials design, class preparation, testing and evaluation but they also have to solve different conflicts pertaining students which arise in normal day lessons and which they lack the experience to face and work out. It is true, when Modern Languages (LEMO) novice teachers graduate they have the theoretical knowledge and have participated in certain controlled practices which have been supervised by their mentors; however, they lack more practice and specific experience in an area or level they are interested in. They have the knowledge, the recipe book; however they lack the practical experience to carry out lessons and solve lesson conflicts effectively.

According to Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999, p. 7) "... (apprentice) teachers need to understand the subject matter they teach, in ways quite different from those learned as students." The idea is expanded when they comment on the importance of interaction with students and how it makes them aware of what the students are able to do with their learning (1999).

This recipe book is shaped by their beliefs, which have to do with the way they think a language lesson ought to be taught. According to Richards (1998), teachers carry out their practice in terms of "...beliefs or principles". The author highlights their importance in teaching since they work as the link between theoretical knowledge and actual teaching practice. A bank of information regarding teacher practice is her beliefs system. Richards

defines beliefs as “the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching” which come together with time and which are deployed during their teaching sessions. Shavelson and Stern (1981), as mentioned by Richards, stated that teachers organize and carry out activities based on their beliefs.

1.1 Purpose

As stated before, novice teachers need to develop an understanding about the teaching profession; however, this is only achieved through experience. A teaching assistantship program was implemented as an innovation in order to allow English student teachers acquire actual experience in a real classroom situation. The aim of the program is to give the student teacher a firsthand experience of actual instruction with all the issues involved in an everyday classroom environment. The innovative aspect of this program is the companionship created between the student teacher and an experience teacher who acts as the guide or mentor for the novice. In order to prove the impact of real classroom experience in a novel teacher, this paper will try to discover belief changes the pre-service educator has prior to the experience and after he has completed the program. Let us remember the above quote from Richards, which states the importance of beliefs and practice; thus, any change in the pre-service teacher’s beliefs would account for changes in his actual teaching decisions and practices. A successful detection of belief changes which in turn have an effect in actual practice would confirm the usefulness of this type of program.

The study attempts to focus on the beliefs held by an EFL novice teacher who is currently studying in a teacher education program in the city of Puebla, México. One could assume that this student teacher would be ready to face classroom situations once he starts his

actual teaching practice; however, by the time the pre-service teacher becomes a full time teacher, it is probable that he will not have had ample exposure to real life classroom experience aside from the controlled teaching practice sessions. This issue is supported by a focus group interview carried out with 6 ninth semester undergraduate Modern Languages students at the Siglo XXI college. At the time the interview took place, four out of the six teacher-students were actually part-time teachers and the other two were tutoring English learners from other study areas in the self-access center located in the above mentioned college. Therefore, these EFL students were facing real classroom situations by the time they were interviewed. Different questions were posed in order to know their beliefs towards language teaching in general and their personal views towards their current teaching practice situation. As the talk continued, the different participants showed a constant tendency, at different rates, to ask for more practical experience.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The need for real life situations practice does not pertain only to the field of second language learning. Juan Carlos Tedesco (2003) proposed the need to implement a new type of methodology in overall higher education in which students attain concrete experience in their area of study. Juan Carlos Tedesco in his article claimed that there are different pillars which support new trends in education. One of these foundations was that of “learning to learn“, which describes how expert teachers in a certain field took the companionship of an “apprentice” or neophyte in the field to carry out a project. During the experience the Expert-teacher works as a “cognitive” companion who serves as a model for the “apprentice” who learns by observing and questioning the expert. Thus, the novice actually learns by doing.

Together with Tedesco's words and the claims held by student teachers in the focus group, it could be inferred that more practice is needed. However, another point will also be stressed in this investigation, which is the fact that this interaction should be performed in a way that both experienced and novice teachers reflect on their performances and beliefs. Therefore, reflective teaching could be proposed to highlight the interaction of teaching beliefs. Due to the fact that this project focuses on the interaction between an experienced teacher and a pre-service teacher, reflection would not only entail the novice practitioner but the experienced teacher as well. A profound scrutiny from the part of the teacher on his practice would be of great importance as well since Grenfell points out that "Once familiarity has been gained with (noise, material, surrounds (new preoccupations)... and they become less noticeable there is more mental space to notice other things." A final thought on acquiring more practice is the amount of reflection both the novice and the experienced teachers would go through, since, as Grenfell puts it, "the more experience teachers are the more reflective they become."

Teachers come into practice with a set of principles or beliefs in which they will base their performances. It would be relevant to understand the way trainees change through the teaching practice process. The theory would allow us to understand the beliefs pre-service teachers hold before experiencing the classroom setting. There are different ideas that shape the teaching practice situation. According to Richards, "... in order to better understand language teaching, we need to know more about language teachers; what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn." Based on this fact, we might suggest that the novice teacher would benefit from this experience since he would

understand the decisions made in the classroom context by the experienced teacher being able to interact with him.

1.3 Rationale

The relevance of this study is validated by the Common European Framework by highlighting the importance of teaching practice because it is "...through the integration of their academic learning with their classroom-based teaching experience, trainee teachers develop a critical awareness about their own learning processes that they are able to put into practice in the language classroom". The focus group participants also agreed on the need for a more particular purpose knowledge development regarding the groups and levels they are interested in.

Another vital factor in the acceptance of this project is the current state of affairs in the teaching and learning field. Experts are turning their attention to a more tangible and practical erudition. Juan Carlos Tedesco proposes the relationship between "Expert and Novice" entities seeking for "observable" behaviors in the completion of tasks so the apprentice can learn by his master. The Common European Framework highlights the importance of collaborative work amongst Expert-teachers and Novice-Teachers, which they call Mentors and in service teachers, they call on experts because it "... serves as vital link between schools and educational institutes and between theory and practice."

This type of relationship would allow the neophyte to be truly immersed in the teaching context at a very early stage. This would prove of great benefit for the novice since the real teaching-learning experience is not the same as teaching controlled practice given that they have little or no saying in the selection or evaluation of materials. In this type of setting

novice teachers would participate in the whole teaching-learning process with the support of the experienced teacher. An important issue mentioned by Grenfell (1998) is the fact that reflection pointed out by trainers in controlled situations such as the classroom setting differs from reflection in the actual teaching context. "... how trainees reflect in schools must be different from reflection in a training institution ". This point encompasses the validity of the teaching-assistantship program in which this paper is based because novice learners would be able to differentiate what is learnt during their teaching lessons and real experience.

One of the issues in this paper is for novice teachers to face real classroom conditions, which according to this author would possibly allow for a conflict between the pre-service teacher's knowledge attained in his training courses and actual practice experience. In other words theory would be contested by practice. However, Grenfell comments that reflection does not necessarily challenge theory. In other words, he says that "... reflection on a practical issue such as methodology may not be formative at all, but simply lead to a rejection or unquestioning acceptance of current pedagogic approaches."

It is of vital importance to allow student teachers to experience instructional practice in a real setting. As the focus group claimed, there is the need for more teaching practice before graduation and the teaching of English for specific purposes. Analyzing the apprentice teacher's belief system and its changes would support the validity and importance of the social service program, which in turn would allow for more teaching practice for other students interested in the experience.

Another important factor that legitimizes this study is reflective teaching. According to Richards and Nunan (1990, p. 247) a reflective teacher "knows the art and craft of teaching,

and considers it carefully both during and after interaction with students.” Both authors expand this idea claiming not only teachers, but the whole teaching staff, including administrators and of course, students. Understanding what pre-service teachers believe and think about educational issues and the way they carry out lessons would allow for better instructional programs.

The following questions are proposed in order to guide this investigation.

1.4 Research Questions

Will the teaching beliefs of a novice pre-service teacher change after he experiences a teaching assistant social service program in a 4th semester Modern Languages English lessons guided by an experienced teacher?

How will the teacher beliefs of a 7th semester Modern Languages student change after he fulfills a teaching-assistantship program in a 4th semester Modern Languages English lessons guided by an experienced tutor?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The following is a recollection of different studies which have a relation to this research project. According to John W. Creswell (2009) a literature review is carried out in order to determine how a research study adds to the knowledge in a certain field. It would conclude whether the study replicate other researches or contribute to the field of study by giving additional information which was missing. This study is analyzing the beliefs of an individual for that reason; his personal story is scrutinized in a qualitative manner. Creswell claims that the literature review should be shaped around the participant's point of view rather than the act of answering a research question.

2.1 Preservice Teachers

A varied array of studies was revised in order to determine how experts are researching into preservice belief systems. An assumption from this author is that analyzing the novice teacher's beliefs would give an insight into their needs when facing real teaching. According to Lunderberg & Levin (2004) found in Ye He & Barbara B. Levin (2008) "beliefs tend to be more subjective and personal, and usually reflect individual judgment and interpretation of the knowledge a community of people agree upon" (2004, p. 38). Based on the previous quote one may infer that the way a teacher perceives classroom context and instruction is precisely the way the educator would execute his practice; following his own personal views of teaching. This thought is corroborated by Harste and Burke as commented by Linda Hughes beliefs, who describe beliefs as "Deep philosophical principles, constructed from past experiences of observations in classrooms as pupils, guide

current teachers-in-training in making instructional decisions” (1994, p. 4). As mentioned above teachers’ modes of thinking are shaped by their experience as students; however, this could be a narrow view of the overall education context. Helenrose Fivesa and Michelle M. Buehl (2008) describe preservice teachers’ beliefs of effective or successful teaching practice as being “naive” in nature because they have had little opportunity to experiment and assess their abilities in real contexts. This would mark the difference between preservice and inservice teachers since experienced educators “may respond differently (to classroom issues) based on their more seasoned perceptions of teaching and personal experiences” (2008, p. 171). This last point is the objective of this research paper because the intent is to depict changes (if any) in a preservice teacher’s beliefs system after real classroom experience.

The idea of this author is that teaching modes and practices change due to real educational interaction. Amy Suzanne Johnson (2004) contributes to the previous asseveration by stating that new teachers experience internal conflicts when faced with actual teaching situations. Johnson claims that when novice teachers embark in the education adventure they “must negotiate a complex network of discourses and power relationships that result from their simultaneous embodiment of the conflicting identities of teacher and student.” (2004, p. 3). In a research project implemented in a University teacher education program by Pamela Terry Godt, Cecelia Benelli and Rhonda Kline (2000), they found that preservice teachers who attended teaching preparation lessons and at the same time were given the chance to teach reflected a change in beliefs as opposed to their colleagues who only attended the program lessons. Their research project was a 4 years longitudinal study. It took a quantitative stance when analyzing data from two different groups; the redesign

group in the innovation program and a control group which was in traditional lessons.

Based on the information gathered, the effect of experience was salient when it came to the innovation group's grades. Initial findings show that students who are in the new program do better in the assessment instruments than those who are in traditional lessons. When comparing students who had been in the program for two years with newcomers, the former did better in their assessments. Redesign students attained better grades in their lessons, higher points in precertification examinations and awards at their institutions. These are unequivocal proofs that in their context the combination of theory and practice was very fruitful in the sense that the redesign group students were able to connect knowledge with performance and apply both instances into their own learning.

2.2 Beliefs of a Pre-service Teacher

The research above shows how pertinent is for preservice teachers to live the classroom situation and how the environment gives the novice educator a different vision of the field. However, not all education experts agree that beliefs can be identified let alone changed. Nespor (1997) and Pajares (1992) found in He and Levin (2008) agree that understanding preservice teachers' beliefs are vital to promote change in their performance and their beliefs as well. However, He and Levin also warned readers as not to overgeneralize the idea that novice educators will change their beliefs through experience because of the difficulty to modify human perceptions. He and Levin, based on Marland, 1998; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Richardson, 1996, 2003 claim that teachers are not a valid source to describe their own beliefs because they are not "always be explicitly aware of the images they hold, or able to articulate their beliefs". Both authors highlight the impermeable nature of beliefs against change by claiming that they are a "strong filter on teacher candidates' learning that

some researchers found beliefs difficult to change” (2008, p. 38). This is not bad news because “difficult to change” does not mean impossible to do so and this is reflected by researchers who continuously seek to understand teachers’ way of thinking and their effect on practice. Another vital point in this study is the fact that new standards in education are taken into consideration in order to implement new teaching programs.

Another study which focused on beliefs change was conducted by Linda Hughes (1994). The researcher tried to identify an alteration in teachers’ beliefs. Hughes, through a qualitative ethnographic study, found that a literacy methods class modified the teaching beliefs of 10 preservice teachers. Hughes used three a self-report questionnaire with open-ended questions (previously piloted Sampson and Linek, 1994) at three different stages. Autobiographies of students’ public-school experiences, course syllabus, instructors’ notes from class discussions, students’ journals were also revised to better detect the transition in beliefs. Results showed that students changed the way they viewed teaching knowledge and skills. A major issue Hughes found is the fact that preservice teachers tended to answer the questionnaires with phrases such as: “I don’t know” “I am not sure”; which according to the author are an example of cognitive conflicts. These conflicts maybe the result of a clash between previously held beliefs and new knowledge attained in their methods class. Hughes’ rationale was to understand beliefs in order to improve teacher education programs. If this is only a methods class, what can we expect from actual classroom experience?

2.3 Mentoring

From the different collection of studies investigated by this author, a project focused on preservice teachers' beliefs and how they were shaped by interaction with their teachers during their school years. Tettegah, Won Whang, Taylor and Cash (2008) conducted a research in which teachers used narratives and visuals in order to see and describe teachers' beliefs through reflection. According to Tettega et.al, by reviewing their narratives and explaining their answers, preservice teachers could reflect on their experiences. These experiences would lead their performance and the way they would interact with their students once they become teachers. Tettega et al, "pre-service teachers will be able to relive and recount some of their influential moments as students, which should, in turn, lead to a more empathic understanding of their future students (2008, p. 123-24). Tettegah et al, again demonstrate the need to analyze beliefs due to their impact on classroom performance and decisions.

Cary A. Buzzelli (2005) also studied a teacher's beliefs system and its implication in her teaching practice. Buzzelli's project does not focus on a novice teacher but on an experienced educator. Her findings are useful for this paper because the subject of the study, Joan a teacher in a multi-age primary classroom, made teaching decisions based on what she believed was morally right. In other words, what she thought was valuable for her students to learn. Buzzelli commented that for her participant "... the particularities (Blum, 1994) of her classroom as a context for her teaching, and those of the individual children in her room, guide her practice" (2005, p 97). Her conclusion is that describing and understanding teacher beliefs can help develop better teacher education programs in which the focus is on sensibilizing educators.

Another investigation demonstrated how culture and the social environment influence educators' beliefs, Ciaran Sugrue (2004) called them "archetypes". According to Goodson (1992, p. 242) as quoted by Sugrue, historical teacher molds have an effect on how current teachers adjust their practice. Goodson added that these molds are "traditions through which particular practices are transmitted and reshaped never exist in isolation from larger social traditions" (2004, p.584). The archetypes and their experiences as students observing their own teachers mold beliefs. The grounded theory study analyzed 180 preservice teachers' modes of thinking, the results depicted that dominant traditional characteristics were still present in the novices' beliefs. However, the researcher also found that social beliefs regarding religion, language and history were going through a transition. The author commented on the need to promote a critical stance both from teachers and students in order to question traditional field of education and the archetypes which are influence the practice of new teachers.

Most of the research this author perused had a qualitative scope since the experiences of people and their ways of thinking were described. However, Helenrose Fivesa and Michelle M. Buehl (2008) conducted a two-phase research project in which they analyzed preservice and inservice teachers' beliefs in order to construct a framework to categorize and determine what teachers believe in. In the second phase once the instrument was designed, the researchers assessed the validity of the framework. The researchers found that new teachers tend to focus on students' performance. As teachers are more experienced they focus on their own performance, their ability to teach and the content of their lessons.

After reviewing this specific collection of studies on beliefs, the salient fact is the importance to understand what teachers hold as effective teaching and what motivates them

to make specific decisions when they are in front of the classroom. Investigators above agreed on the fact that knowing what teachers think would help design and improve education programs. The purpose of this research project is to determine whether a student teacher changed his beliefs after being immersed in a real classroom context. Most the investigations examined preservice teachers away from the actual practice, except from He and Levin's study which took into consideration both the lessons the preservice teachers were taking (theory) and the actual classroom experience (practice). This last study proofs the validity of the research project initiated by this author; placing preservice teachers in a real situation in order to describe their beliefs and possibly discover a change in the way they regard teaching.

2.4 Teacher Training versus Teacher Development

In this work, a distinction is drawn between teacher training and teacher development. Teacher training refers to the idea that through systematic observation certain teaching behaviors can be identified that are desirable to promote more effective learning in the classroom. These behaviors are incorporated into teacher training programs to help promote more effective teaching (Richards 1990). These behaviors generally fit into low inference categories such as question use and wait time. In this 'micro-approach' to teaching, a basic assumption is that effective teaching can be characterized as a reoccurring pattern of behaviors employed by the teacher during instruction (1990, p. 4). In a teacher training program, the trainee is considered to be an apprentice.

Teacher development refers to a 'macro-approach' to teaching which includes high inference qualities such as creativity, judgment and adaptability as well as low inference categories (Richards 1990, p 9). In teacher development programs, the trainee is

considered to be receiving an education that focuses on clarifying the concepts and thinking processes that guide effective language teaching (1990). Activities and experiences are needed to help the trainee teacher acquire the means to make decisions in regard to classroom practices. Richards (1990, p.15) describes the intent of this teacher preparation as to “provide opportunities for the novice (teacher-learner) to acquire the skills and competencies of effective teachers and to discover the working rules that effective teachers use.”

2.5 Models of Supervision

Traditionally, the roles of the supervisor in teacher education have been relatively narrow in scope. They could typically be described as: the teacher as a guide, a model, an advisor, an evaluator or a suggestion maker (Gebhard 1990). However, recently, ESL/EFL professionals have begun to realize that supervision can encompass much more than these traditional views. Gebhard (1990) offers a very expansive view of what supervision might include when he discusses six possible models of supervision including: (1) directive, (2) alternative, (3) collaborative, (4) non-directive, (5) creative, and (6) self-help – explorative. Freeman (1990) offers a more compact analysis of supervision, noting three approaches that he calls: the supervisory approach, the alternatives approach and the non-directive approach where he covers many of the same issues with considerable overlap. Wallace (1991) simplifies the categorization of supervision even further when he describes supervisory behaviors as having the tendency to fall into one of two approaches: the prescriptive approach or the collaborative approach. In order to further explore these alternative ways to describe the role of the supervisor and supervision, Gebhard’s six models will be examined in greater detail since his description is probably the most

exhaustive and his ideas have received considerable attention in the ESL/EFL field recently.

2.5.1 Directive Supervision

Directive supervision is the model that has traditionally been used by most supervisors over the years. In this model the supervisor's role is to "direct and inform the teacher, model teaching behaviors, and evaluate the teacher's mastery of defined behaviors" (Gebhard 1990). Gebhard (1990) proposes three potential problems can emerge from using this model.

First, there is very little evidence as to what 'good' language teaching is. Williams (1989) expresses strong doubts as to whether anyone can actually define what 'good' and 'bad' teaching is. Although a large expansion of research issues and theoretical concepts have taken place in the field, there has been very little systematic study of second language teaching processes that could provide a basis for deriving teaching practices in second language teacher education (Richards 1990). It is, therefore, very difficult to justify prescribing what teachers should do in their classrooms.

Second, this model is often associated with a tendency to make the practicing teacher feel defensive and encourage low self-esteem. Williams (1989) describes the "considerable stress and upset" that observation traditionally causes teachers when they are being observed, and Gebhard (1990) expresses concern that the actual teacher will "see themselves as inferior to the supervisor." If the teacher is constantly afraid of being judged by the supervisor it may inhibit the teacher from trying new ideas and exploring teaching (Rowe in Gebhard 1990).

Third, directive supervision presents a problem with who is responsible for what goes on in the classroom. Fanselow (1990) says, “prescriptions from a supervisor’s evaluations can be demeaning and decrease the teacher’s authority and responsibility.” He warns that these prescriptions can lead to a “learned helplessness” as the teacher accepts the supervisor’s superior position and adopts the ‘ours is not to wonder why’ attitude (1990). The problem is that these attitudes do not prepare the teacher to go into the real world of teaching.

Fanselow advocates the shifting of responsibility for decision making from the teacher educator to the classroom teacher (1990).

Although, these problems with directive supervision are commonly held views within the current literature, there is argument that a more prescriptive approach has its place in teacher education as well. Kennedy (1993) brings up the point that the supervisor, in reality, does have more power in the relationship than the trainee since the supervisor has the sanction to pass or fail the trainee. If the supervisor shares his or her philosophies and theories on education and is clear about how evaluation and assessment will take place with the trainee, the relationship actually becomes much more honest (1993). Freeman in Wallace (1991) also advocates the supervisor sharing what is expected from the trainee, and comments on the security that it can provide for both people. Bowers (1987) as seen in Wallace (1991) also advocates training as well as development in inexperienced teachers in order to promote certain desired teaching behaviors.

2.5.2 Alternative Supervision

Alternative supervision arose from indications that some less experienced teachers feel the need to be told what to do when they begin to teach. It is an approach which allows supervisors to direct teachers, but not necessarily explicitly prescribe exactly what they

should do (Gebhard 1990). The role of the supervisor is to “suggest a variety of alternatives to what the teacher has done in the classroom” (1990). By reducing the number of choices available to the teacher, the supervisor reduces the trainee’s anxiety while ultimately leaving the decision making responsibilities in their hands (Freeman 1982). Freeman suggests that this approach works best if the supervisor is not judgmental and does not favor any one of the possible alternatives. The purpose of making the suggestions is to “widen the scope of what a teacher will consider doing” (Gebhard 1990).

Fanselow (1990) offers some interesting ideas on an approach to supervision, which embodies many of the principles of alternative supervision. Some of the suggestions that Fanselow offers about how alternatives can be used to guide beginning teachers include: trying the opposite of what they usually do, duplicating inside the classroom what goes on outside the classroom setting, being aware of ‘leaden’ moments, and to identify consistent problems -- and trying alternative behaviors to resolve them (Gebhard 1990). Fanselow (1990) makes clear that one primary aim is for teachers to try alternative behaviors and consider the consequences. The above account of Fanselow’s approach is incomplete and highlights only the most relevant ideas in relation to the alternative model of supervision. Other aspects of his approach will be further discussed in this work (section 2.5.6).

2.5.3 Collaborative Supervision

When working within a collaborative model, the supervisor’s role is to establish a sharing relationship with teachers as they work together, but the supervisor does not direct the trainee (Gebhard 1990). The supervisor participates actively with the teacher in any decision making in which the teacher and supervisor engage in a problem-solving process that requires a sharing of ideas in regard to the teacher’s classroom teaching (1990).

Together, the supervisor and teacher pose a hypothesis and go through experimentation processes in an attempt to find viable solutions to the problems being considered. The ideals of equality and mutual respect are key aspects in a collaborative model of supervision. This model is often called clinical supervision, and it should be mentioned that it is often difficult to achieve a feeling of true equality between a supervisor and a trainee. Williams (1989) refers to the nervousness that teachers feel before an observation as natural and very difficult to fully eliminate. Gebhard (1990) also mentions that cultural factors in some contexts make it very difficult for a feeling of equality to be established between a supervisor and a trainee.

2.5.4 Nondirective Supervision

The role of the supervisor in a non-directive model is to listen to the trainee and demonstrate an understanding of what the trainee has said by providing an “understanding response”, which is a “re-cognized” version of what the speaker has just said (Gebhard 1990). The speaker is not just repeating, but rather restates through paraphrase what he or she has understood by the trainee’s comments. The aim is to allow the trainees to express and clarify their ideas freely and openly while a feeling of support and trust grows between the supervisor and the trainee teacher (Freeman 1982). A non-directive model is intended to give the trainees the opportunity to raise questions about their teaching while gaining experience in decision making and further realizing their responsibility for their own teaching behaviors (Gebhard 1990).

Edge (1992) proposes an approach which embodies many aspects of the non-directive model that he calls co-operative development. In co-operative development, the role of the supervisor (or understander as he puts it) is to help the trainee (or speaker)

develop their own ideas as the speaker clarifies them and discovers where they lead (1992)

He explains:

...we learn by speaking, by trying to put our thoughts together and express them so that someone else can understand them. It is in this way that we bring together intellectual and experiential knowledge into a coherent, individual statement which we learn as we formulate. Through this formulation, we can also prepare to act.

Edge (1992) describes three attitudinal qualities that must be present in the interaction between the speaker and the understander. The first is respect which is described as an accepting non-judgmental attitude toward what the speaker chooses to talk about as well as the speaker's evaluations, opinions and intentions. Edge also sees the need for the understander to empathize with the speaker, which entails understanding "the classroom, the teaching and the learning through the learner's frame of reference" (Edge 1992). The last quality is honesty, which is achieved when the understander is genuine about their respect and empathy. It does not entail telling the speaker true opinions about what the speaker is saying. Edge goes on to describe nine techniques which the understander must develop in order to help the speaker develop their ideas, which can be seen in Edge (1992).

Lansley (1994), on the other hand, is quite critical of certain aspects of co-operative development when he says, "I only wish to examine the risk of such exercises (co-operative development), which may reinforce the prejudices of the morally illiterate." He goes on to give examples where co-operative development could reinforce negative stereotyping, and argues that some opinions are simply not worthy of Edge's definition of respect, citing racism as an example. Lansley continues to clarify that the real problem that he sees with

Edge's approach is "the exclusion of the opinion of others as a means to modifying one's own opinions, beliefs, or principles" (Lansley 1994). The author of this work agrees with Lansley's criticism toward blindly accepting all of the ideas of an approach like cooperative development, but also sees the merit of such techniques with certain types of learners. Edge, himself, recognized that "Cooperative learning is not for everyone" (Edge 1992).

2.5.5 Creative Supervision

Creative supervision is a model that encourages freedom and creativity without limitations that may arise by following any one of the previously mentioned models of supervision in a very strict manner. Gebhard (1990) mentions three qualities of creative supervision that allows for this freedom and creativity, including: "(1) a combination of models or a combination of supervisory behaviors from different models, (2) a shifting of supervisory responsibilities from the supervisor to other sources, and (3) an application of insights from other fields that are not found in any of the models."

Using any one model exclusively can tend to limit the possibilities that are available to a supervisor. Freeman (1990) recognizes the need to combine aspects of certain models at times, often depending on the particular needs of the trainee. The author of the present work often uses a non-directive approach initially in order to gain the trainee's confidence and gradually moves toward collaboration as the teaching practice course develops. There is practically an endless possible combination of the models.

In regards to shifting the responsibility of supervision to alternative sources, Gebhard (1990) offers a variety of suggestions. One way is use peer supervision where fellow

teachers supervise each others' classes. The development of teacher centers is another option (1990). A teacher center is a place where a teacher can go to look for answers to questions, use resources and talk about problems regarding teaching with peers or expert supervisors (1990). Instead of supervisors going to the teacher, the teacher goes to the teacher center as assistance is needed.

The most common way that insights from other fields are used in creative supervision is through the adaptation and application of observation systems that were originally developed for research (Gebhard 1990). Observations systems are seen as valuable because of their objective nature. They provide a means for description rather than judgment while providing a technical language to talk about teaching (Fanselow 1990). Gebhard (1990) sees no reason to limit insights from any possible field and suggests insights from business management, yoga, story telling, and counseling among others.

2.5.6 Self-help – Explorative Supervision

This model arose mostly from the approach to supervision that was developed by Fanselow (1990) that was previously mentioned in this work (section 2.5.2). He proposes to have the aim of observation by a supervisor (or visiting teacher as he puts it) to be self-exploration and to “see one’s own teaching differently” instead of the usual aim of trying to ‘help’ or evaluate the person being observed. He emphasizes that “observation to explore is a process; observation to help or evaluate is a product” (1990). Fanselow (1990) outlines some helpful practices in order to begin this process of self-exploration which include:

1. Short amounts of time have to be set aside for observation and discussion.

2. Segments from observed lessons need to be collected by note taking, taping, or transcribing.
3. The exchanges and activities in the segments need to be grouped in a range of ways
4. Finally, what was done, as reflected in notes, tapes, and transcripts, needs to be related to notions, beliefs, and goals. Coupling this data collection and analysis with discussions of freedom and the need for each of us to construct our own knowledge helps many visiting teachers to decrease their suggestions to others, to increase their descriptive and analytical comments about the lessons observed, and to relate their insights to their own lessons.

One of the interesting aspects of this process is that during an observation, the visiting teacher is encouraged to describe what happens in the classroom without making judgmental comments. Fanselow (1990) reminds us that making judgmental comments “is a sure way to miss seeing anything differently, a sure way to limit our observations by trying to relate them to our preconceived notions of good and bad teaching.” The above account of Fanselow’s approach is necessarily compact for the purposes of this work. A much more comprehensive explanation of Fanselow’s approach to supervision is available and highly recommended in Fanselow (1990).

2.6 Needs of Trainee Teachers

Being able to recognize and meet the needs of trainee teachers in relation to teaching practice is obviously an important element to being an effective supervisor. Kennedy (1993) recognizes the importance of matching the priorities of the supervisor and

the trainee and cautions against the tensions that can be set up when priorities are radically different. In a study concerned with teacher trainee needs in relation to teaching practice, she identified issues of particular concern to a group of learners in three areas which included: lesson planning and preparation; the classroom and pupils; and self-evaluation, supervision, and assessment (1993).

In the planning stages, issues regarding decision making arose. Most supervisors normally consider the content of a lesson plan to be of primary concern, but Kennedy (1993) discovered that the form of the plan was a much greater concern to the group of learners than the actual substance as an overwhelming number of trainees reported being concerned with “making it (the lesson plan) look good.” Kennedy (1993) warns that such anxiety over surface elements of a plan can deflect them from the plan itself.

Kennedy (1993) also discovered a large gap between the priorities of the supervisor and the trainees in relation to the importance of deciding on objectives for their lesson plans reporting that the trainees usually specified extremely vague objectives or worked backwards by deciding on activities and, later, created objectives that suited the particular activity. However, the context of teaching practice usually forces the supervisor to demand this ability from trainees.

Kennedy (1993) recommends taking some of the minor decisions out of the trainees’ hands. She suggests: “setting out explicitly a pro-forma lesson plan, giving clearly written objectives for tasks, and so on – and yet allowing trainees to develop their own strategies which harmonize with their teaching situation.” Gower and Walters (1983) make similar suggestions about helping the inexperienced trainee to define the language point, skills and aims of a lesson to be taught, and to later allow the trainee to make more decisions in

planning. Williams (1989) recommends that the trainee uses a checklist of points for the trainer to use when preparing the lesson plan in order to help them focus on certain aspects of their teaching.

Kennedy (1993) also found that many of the materials that the trainees chose to use were actually chosen because they wanted to 'please the supervisor'. Even when the trainees felt like the book would have been adequate without supplementary materials, they didn't "dare" use it alone (1993). She suggests that regardless of how supervisors try to encourage development, the trainees will look for implicit signals of what the supervisor wants and that it may be preferable if we make our philosophies and beliefs explicit (1993). Wallace (1991) also suggests that supervisors make their expectations clear implicitly as well as explicitly by "practising what you preach" and allowing trainees to experience a procedure as a consumer in order to evaluate it before they are expected to present it to their clients.

In regard to self-evaluation, Kennedy (1993) raises two important issues. First, the kind of self-evaluation that the trainees wanted, didn't agree with the supervisors desire for them to become professionally reflective, and second, there was a wide gap between how trainees saw their performance and how the supervisor saw it (1993). The learners reported a strong dislike for choosing a focus area of the observation as Williams (1989) recommends in order to encourage development. They did, however, find it very valuable to express their feelings in an unstructured way (Kennedy 1993). Their comments usually entailed finding faults with the supervisor instead of focusing on pedagogic aspects of the teaching as the supervisors would have liked. Kennedy (1993) recommends having both types of evaluations starting with a free evaluation to respond to feelings of the moment,

and later, moving to more structured evaluation with the assistance of the supervisor (1993).

Supervision is another area where a large gap between the needs of the trainees and the wants of the supervisor was encountered. Where the supervisors most commonly wanted to encourage development and reflection on the part of the trainee, the trainee most commonly wanted quick and helpful (directive) advice from someone that they knew and trusted (Kennedy 1993). The creative approach mentioned earlier in this work might provide a useful solution to this problem. As Freeman (1990) advocates, combining elements of different models could offer more choices to a supervisor if the need for more direction becomes necessary. Later, the supervisor could begin to move toward a more alternative or collaborative type model as the trainee is ready to accept responsibility for their teaching behaviors.

Kennedy (1993) reports that assessment was an area that naturally made the trainees very anxious. She says that “assessment often lurks behind supervision,” and that the trainees want to be involved in the supervision process (1993). Kennedy (1993) strongly advocates making assessment criteria clear when she says, “Supervisors must together be absolutely clear how they are to evaluate and assess practice and they must make that explicit to trainees.” Wallace also encourages making expectations explicit by clearly stating criteria for assessment in order to “clear the fog of mystery” surrounding these issues (1991).

2.7 Promoting Trainee Autonomy

When thinking about promoting trainee autonomy, a reference is often made to the distinction drawn between teacher training and teacher development that was clarified earlier in this work (section 1.1). There is a relatively wide-spread agreement in the literature that teacher training usually leads to dependence on the part of the trainee, while teacher development is thought to lead the trainee toward becoming an autonomous decision maker who takes responsibility for his or her own teaching behaviors. Although few authors would boldly make such a clear cut distinction, it is a widely held view implicit in the literature. Examining the models of supervision in section 1.2 of the current work, there are various references to the implications that following certain models of supervision have on learner autonomy.

Freeman (1990) does advocate a balance between teacher training and teacher development noting that “training strategy, when used exclusively can lead to an over-emphasis on teaching skills and behaviors at the expense of developing the student teacher’s independent resources and capacity to take charge of what he or she is doing”, but he reminds the reader that the processes of reasoning that underlie the development strategy may not be appropriate for discrete teaching skills. Advocating such a balance is not uncommon. Kennedy (1993) also warns against adopting a purely developmental, reflective approach. The author of this work sees the need for a balance between teacher training and teacher development with inexperienced trainees, but would recommend that more emphasis be placed on teacher development.

2.8 Criteria for Assessment of Teaching Practice

Wallace (1991) refers to assessment of teaching practice as a “necessary evil” which is necessary since it determines what trainees must do in order to gain the qualifications.

Wallace mentions that the assessment should be formative and summative, it should be varied, it should provide sufficient information to yield adequate information about the trainee's progress, and it should be distributed so that it does not put excessive pressure on the trainee at certain points in the course. He also recommends different modes of assessment which might include exercises, presentations, essays, projects, and portfolios (1991).

In order to avoid measurements of pass or fail being determined by an internalized judgment on the part of a highly skilled observer, an explicitly stated, observable, and measurable criteria can be developed to assess the trainee's performance (Wallace 1991).

The difficulty in establishing criteria for teaching practice is that trying to state the complex teaching behaviors in observable terms often trivializes the complex process that teaching is (1991). This method of assessment undermines in some ways the principles of teacher education.

2.9 Conclusion

The sections above examined many of the theoretical issues that underpin this study. They were discussed in detail in order for the reader to be more aware of the complex issues that surround a study of this nature. The study now goes on to detail the methodological procedures that were undertaken in order to gather and analyze data for the current investigation.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The following will be an explanation of the methodology used in this paper. First the subject of the study and his social and education background will be described. An illustration of the setting, where and how the information was collected will follow. Finally, a depiction of the instruments will conclude this chapter.

3.1 Research Strategy

This will be a qualitative research study, since opinions, beliefs and preferred learning situations will be analyzed. This study will be examined through a qualitative lens. Since this type of study focuses on the experiences of a single person, we need to understand his experiences. According to Sharan B. Merriam 1998 (p. 6), qualitative research focuses in “understanding the meaning people have constructed.” Therefore the study focuses on the meaning through his experiences. In understanding how the apprentice teacher develops his set of beliefs and taking into account the interviews carried out, observations (which will be compared to student’s reflections) and a document on a reflection about the novice’s experience will be analyzed. A clearer picture would emerge on changes in beliefs (if any) and possible confirmation on beliefs when putting all the evidence together. Sherman and Webb (1998), pinpoint this issue as described by Merriam by explaining that qualitative research “implies a direct concern with experience as it is ‘lived or ‘felt’ or ‘undergone.’”. Since we are looking at preferences, a quantitative approach would not be advisable because beliefs and attitudes towards a certain concept would not be materialized to be counted.

This study would fit into the different features Merriam established for qualitative research. She described qualitative exploration based on a personal interaction between participant and researcher. Since the participant (pre-service teacher) will work with this author there will be an "emic" perspective since the researcher will be able to have a closer look on how the participant develops his experience, hence providing what Merriam called "the insider's perspective" on the occurrence. The second characteristic Merriam mentioned is that the investigator is "the primary instrument for data collection and analysis". Due to the nature of this study different questions will definitely arise because of the close interaction between the two, which matches the third characteristic "fieldwork". Both, the apprentice teacher and the experienced teacher / researcher will share the same setting. The next point has to do with the way the researcher looks for a way to understand and elucidate data with a theory following an "inductive approach" (1992). The last point qualitative research entails is the way it focuses on "process, meaning and understanding", which the experience provides since there will be a follow up from the beginning until the end 'process'.

3.2 The researcher

The investigator of this paper is a 32 years old languages teacher. He holds a BA in Modern Languages from the University of Puebla in Mexico and he is currently concluding an MA in English Language Teaching from the same university. It is important to signal that the researcher is also the experienced teacher who will work with the novice and also, he is the innovation implementer. These are issues to take into consideration in order to avoid biases when it comes to the data interpretation. It is evidently an agenda in this paper, to prove the effectiveness of the program and its future dissemination. However, the

limited participation from other teachers at the time the research began obliged this investigator to take part as the experienced teacher as well. This issue could be convenient as well to the purpose of the paper since the researcher will be able to see the novice's development at first hand. This insider's perspective will also guarantee a more profound interpretation when analyzing the data.

3.3 The Participant

The novice apprentice who will take part in this project is a 22 year old male undergraduate Modern Languages (LEMO) student in the 8th semester from 'Instituto de Estudios Avanzados Siglo XXI'. He has been studying English in a formal setting for 3 years and a half for a total of 10 hours per week. According to the university's program all of his lessons starting in the fourth semester must be in English; therefore, he is expected to have experienced ample exposure to English. Besides his language knowledge he has been in teacher education lessons since he was in third semester. As an institutional requirement every LEMO student must fulfill a total of 12 teaching practice hours either in the institution's language laboratory or in a short TOEFL preparation course. From his experience as a student and the time spent in teaching practice, he could establish what his teacher's beliefs are which is the overall purpose of this study.

The teacher apprentice student was chosen among two other candidates via three instruments; a video recorded interview, a background information questionnaire, and a written description of what he believes are the characteristics of a good English teacher. He was chosen because of his eagerness to participate in this program. His high degree of motivation might ensure his continuity in his participation and performance. Out of the

three candidates he managed to use English more effectively. Let us remember that he will be a teacher assistant in an English class; therefore certain language proficiency is a must.

3.4 The setting

The social service program in which the novice will be involved is an innovation project implemented at small private college in downtown Puebla. This program will be deployed for the first time at this institution. This program was proposed due to current trends in worldwide education. According to Tedesco (2003) one of the four pillars of education is “learning to learn” which he claims could take the form of a “novice-expert” relationship. This type of relationship would allow the apprentice teacher to develop concrete significant knowledge on her field of study, since she would be in the real context supervised by an expert teacher. This experience would be a window into the beliefs and perceptions held by the novice teacher and their possible transition.

Another basic key point that supports the program implementation was provided by 5 undergraduate 9th semester students from the same college who participated in a focus group. This type of group interview was chosen due to the instantaneous responses given by the interviewees. Steinar Kvale (1996) highlights the importance of the interactive relationship developed in this type of conference. The overall claim from the students was that more teaching practice was needed and that this experience was oriented to suit specific knowledge for specific level and groups.

3.5 Triangulation

A crucial issue for any research is validation; the way to achieve this is via triangulation.

Robert Stake commented that by presenting “a substantial body of uncontestable

description”, which erupts from the need for collecting data and its logical interpretation (1995, page 111). Cohen and Manion define it as the “use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior” in order to give a vast explanation of the analyzed situation (1994). Both authors describe its importance when “human behavior is analyzed. Both experts claim that data results need to show “confidence” which can only be achieved when different research methods show a steadiness in their outcomes. They also agree that triangulation is important when case studies are carried out, which is the research approach of this paper (1994).

3.6 Instruments

According to Keith Richards (2003), there are different ways to gather data in order to depict the overall situation of the research. For the purpose of this investigation two questionnaires, two interviews, and a document (critical moment) will be implemented. The subject will be asked to observe a lesson he taught in order to contest what he believed to his actual performance.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) describe the easy applicability questionnaires entail. In this research open-ended questionnaires will be used in order to allow the participant to supply unrestricted answers. Besides, it provokes “an honest, personal comment from the respondent (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, p. 255).”

3.6.2 Document

The subject will be asked to write his thoughts on a critical moment he experienced during the apprenticeship program. This document would allow the researcher to get immersed

into the subject's ideas and beliefs. The critical moment writing reflection would fit into what Denzin and Lincoln (1998) described as firsthand documents. I believe this reflection would give the subject time to reflect on his experience without the pressure of an immediate answer during an interview.

3.6.3 Interviews

An interview is “a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation” by Cannell and Kahn, (1968) commented by Cohen and Manion (1994, page 271). In other words information is collected via oral exchange between researcher and interviewee Cohen and Manion (1994).

3.6.4 Observation

This is a very interesting aspect of the study since there will be a close interaction between both the apprentice teacher and the experienced teacher, who happens to be this researcher as well. Observations as mentioned by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, page 305) are of great value for research because they allow for the “opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations.” Observations are immediate data collectors because the researcher is immersed in the participant's setting which will give evidence on the relation between what he states during interviews and questionnaires and what he really does during class. In other words one will be able to see if what he does is what he preaches. An important issue to highlight is that observations will be carried out on a daily basis due to the nature of this project as mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph. However scheduled

observations would have to be carried out in order to avoid interventions from the researcher.

3.7 Qualitative Analysis

The instruments analyzed in this study are two interviews, one before the experience and a post interview since this could prove an “evolution of the case” Creswell (2007, p. 163).

The intended analysis is to categorize the beliefs the subject depicts from both the questionnaires and the interviews. By grouping constant elements this researcher could draw meanings from issue-relevant meanings will emerge”. There are basically five groups in which categories might emerge: students’ roles, materials, teachers’ roles, evaluation and the subject’s characteristics in teaching. Face to face interaction during interviews could ease the implementation of direct interpretation when analyzing the data. Stakes as mentioned in Creswell (2007, p. 163) mentions that interpretation “looks at a single instance and draws meaning from it without looking for multiple instances

3.8 Conclusion

The sections above describe the methodological procedures that surround the study as well as some of the theoretical issues surrounding qualitative data analysis. It is meant to inform the reader of the procedures that were carried out in order to gather data as well as analyze it. It also provides descriptions of the setting and the instruments.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

In order to obtain a deep picture of the participant's thoughts and attitudes regarding teaching. Two open-ended questionnaires were administered; one before the experience and the second after the class semester was over. Two interviews were also expected; one before and the second after the experience. The participant received the two questionnaires beforehand so he would get acquainted with the topics and reflect deeply on his answers when he was interviewed. The participant also wrote a reflection paper about a critical moment in his teaching practice which might have caused a conflict between what he belief about education. The participant was given ample to time to write the document in order to get deep thought answers.

The intent of the instruments was to obtain deep thought answers from the participant; however. The last interview was expected to take the participant back to the projected issues and thus get more indications about the presence of beliefs and their possible modification through experience. It is vital to remind the readers that this author was also the assistant program implementer and the mentor teacher; issues of bias in analysis could be said to be present; nevertheless, the different instruments used could attest the validity of obtained data. The information gathered was perused different times and then placed in previously designed categories. The questions themselves served as guide to categorize direct responses and emerging constant themes. Borg (2006) tried to summarize different studies in preservice teachers' beliefs which resulted in different characteristics that novice teachers possess. Therefore, his categories were used to give a structure to the participant's responses.

4.1 Naive thoughts about the participant's teaching practice

According to Borg (2006) trying to define a sole description of preservice teachers' belief system has been an arduous task. Through years, researchers have faced the task of understanding preservice thinking processes, the underlying notions they have and the connection they have with the teaching decisions they make in an educational environment.

Basically, preservice teachers are said to be "naive" about the teaching practice. The ideas they have about the teaching profession do not match real classroom experience. This provides them with a sense of frustration since what they believe is contested by real students, real classroom and real programs. John was confronted by the fact that "not all the activities that were put into practice had the result that was expected". He did not necessarily feel frustrated because at times he managed to turn bumpy moments into challenges "to make a bigger effort" for further classes. Before the experience, he recalled thinking that teachers were a "know-it-all entities" He thought teaching practice was "just about standing up in front of the classroom". After the experience, John's transition was evident because he was aware of the need to be more prepared, one may infer he referred to language knowledge, structure and vocabulary. During our after-class talks, the notion of being "being prepared" was mentioned again, thus it might mean it was an issue he needed to polish or a point of departure to access teaching effectiveness. John said that "students think the teacher knows everything because they asked (about grammar or vocabulary)... that I did not know... (which) made me feel uncomfortable". Again, John saw problems as a chance to improve his own practice. He constantly mentioned that "... it (a class that did not go as planned) made me think teachers have to be well prepared".

Another point in which preservice coincide is that they tend to overlook error correction.

Before the program started, John mentioned that it was important for learners to excel in the use of English. He mentioned that learners must make use of appropriate vocabulary and structures. He was even conscious of his own performance in English, he claimed “I don’t want to make mistakes... I am a model for my students”. During the experience he was self-conscious about his own language productions and wanted to serve as a model for students. At the beginning he was preoccupied that students continuously made mistakes because as he put it “errors might be present in exams”, errors could be fossilized” as he had read for his classes. During our meetings he constantly asked about his performance, what he had done and what he could to improve his practice. At some point during his performance a key point was “error correction”. At one point, this had a negative effect in his teaching practice since he constantly corrected students when he thought they had made a mistake. Learners were a bit pressured by him and it had an impact on their participation during lessons. Another issue regarding correction was that John, at the time of the program, was still a student and he was developing his skills in English. Due to this fact, he overlooked actual errors students made. It was at this point that during the interviews that we focused on this issue. After different sessions, he was more conscious about error correction as a teaching strategy. During the last interview, John mentioned that he felt the pressure to perform well and that he might have overexaggerated when correcting students. When asked how he conceived errors after the teaching assistantship program, John mentioned that mistakes are part of the process and that sometimes it is ok to let some faulty production go during classes as not to pressure students. His practice transcended from a focus on form to a more communicative one in which his actual students were

allowed some errors in their production in order to provide a safe relaxed environment in which they felt freedom to participate.

Preservice beliefs and practice are highly and directly influenced by their prior experience as language students. In other words, they copy and/or reproduce what they have seen in classrooms. The teachers they regard as “good” in their own practice are a model for them. John expressed during the first interview that he had two teachers that had an influence on his decision to become an educator. He pinpointed in different occasions that he wanted to give back what he had received as a student. He constantly praised a teacher he had in Elementary school in the USA. As a college student he also modeled his teaching after different teachers he liked. Bailey (1996) as mentioned in Borg (2006) that language learning experiences have an effect in shaping teaching philosophies, in other words beliefs. During our after-class meetings when preparing lessons, he would recall activities, classroom management and materials choice he claimed that “worked well” for him when he was a student. According to Johnson in Borg (2006) “preservice teachers judged the appropriateness of certain theories, methods, and materials in terms of their own first hand experiences as second language learners”. Again, prior experience as a student emerged when John wanted to implement an idea based on what he enjoyed to do as a language learner and also, he avoided some teaching strategies which he did not enjoy when learning his target language.

This previous experience as a student also provokes tensions from what he believes what real experience holds within the classroom environment. John well ahead in the teaching assistantship program mentioned his preoccupation when he said “I am turning into the teacher I didn’t like when I was a student”. He believed that what he had learned from his classes, the real teaching experience he was encountering everyday inside the classroom environment were in a constant clash against each other. Once, after a lesson he did not feel happy with his own performance, he had been in a difficult situation when he felt he scolded a student for not paying attention in class. “I felt I my job as a teacher had been challenged, I didn’t know what to do so I raised my voice and confronted the students... that wasn’t me...I didn’t like how I managed that moment...I had tried what the books and my teachers had taught me but it didn’t seem to work”. John evidently faced a situation that challenged his knowledge and beliefs. In an extract from his interview before the experience he mentioned that

Another feature of preservice teachers as mentioned by Warford and Reeves (2003) in Borg (2006) is that preservice teachers tend to view teaching as a “day-to-day” activity. They fail to recognize or visualize the practice of in-service teachers. John faced the fact that he was not preparing a ten-session class. He was now designing materials for a whole semester. He was impressed by the fact that during the experience materials, exams and classes had an impact for the whole semester. He was concerned that every decision he made would have a direct effect on students’ learning. He realized that classes were in a sequence and used it for his advantage. During his reflections, John said “... after each class the feedback from students was discussed to improve the lessons. It is important to mention that the teacher always advised the assistant how to improve activities. As result of planning the activities

it was easier for me planning activities by myself because of the experience from the previous lessons. By analyzing his ideas, one understands that the companionship between the experience teacher and the preservice teacher was helping him understand and reflect on his own practice and act upon it. He was making decision based on actual classroom experience and using it to improve his practice. John seemed to have become reflective upon his own performance and how it influenced students. He commented on the fact that teachers plan lessons and according to students' reactions and performance they make decisions for their teaching. There seems to be a cyclical reflection from his part. He prepared lessons, determined effectiveness from students' reactions and then reflected upon his own practice and applied his own newly achieved knowledge when making teaching decisions. This reflection phase might be only achieved once real classroom issues are experienced.

Materials aid class

When reflecting on the types of materials used, during sessions after classes John expressed his concern on the type of materials that would be suitable for each class. His original intent before the experience was to use "authentic materials" which he believed would be fun and interest which would benefit students' learning. At the beginning of the experience, John questioned the nature of the materials I had designed. He wanted to know why and how the materials we would use impacted students' learning. He even criticized the emphasis on the book for preparing lessons. His wish was to present students with materials that would "switch on students' brains" as he previously mentioned in the first interview. However, when evaluation time came, he was pressured to cover grammar and vocabulary topics which came from the book and were present in partial exams. John, was disappointed with

his own choice of materials and activities. He said that “some activities that were put into practice were not (designed and/or chosen) according to the right level of the students and sometimes learners didn’t like (the activities and materials). This is another vital point; his motivation was on pleasing students with his teaching practice. By the end of the experience his idea of fun and interesting materials mutated into “practical, suitably designed taking into account previous and new (learning) experiences.”

Rapport

As mentioned early, there was a concealed motivation to please students. It is understandable, he mentioned in his reflection that “Confidence and friendship are very important because (they) are essential to make a better environment in the classroom. Therefore, students will feel in a familiar environment in which they will be more confident (to participate)”. The idea of becoming a “friend” came to his mind, he believed that having a good environment would allow for teachers and students to become friends. He had an idea in mind though; “but friendship has to have a limit”. John had an amicable relationship with students. He was eager to provide an atmosphere of comradeship in which students were free to clarify their doubts and participate in classes. At the beginning, John wanted to be friendly with everyone and it helped him. We would take the role of strict teacher and laid-back teacher. This type of relationship helped introvert students. When I asked feedback from my students about John, they always commented on the fact that it was easy for them to talk to him since he was young and a student as well as them. There seems to be no difference in rapport. He believed that a friendly environment fosters learning. However, in the last interview he mentioned that “not all students want you to be their friend... it seems as they don’t like you... there are students who are friendly but

others not... it seems like you are their enemy". In the last interview he mentioned "environment in which students feel comfortable..." which means, a change in beliefs.

Finally, there were other areas in which a change in beliefs was noticeable. When asked his concerns about the teaching profession he mentioned "(it is).. a lot of work, the lack of interest from Ss toward the learning, the time, the environment inside the classroom (some times it is heavy) and finally the classes are not always successful". After the experience, John's concerns and interests transited to "the interaction between students because most of the teachers do not focused in the communication into the classroom. One issue that concerns me is that I have to be more prepared to become a good teacher also I have to be well organized". He adds to the idea of class preparation by saying "(teaching) involves planning lessons, planning activities that have to be according to the right level, spending time before or after the classes." Now, John seemed to be more aware of stress of a real experience in which decisions impact students over the long run. s

Self-confidence

A salient topic in John's reflection on his experience as a teacher assistant was self-confidence. He believed that he was not up to the task. He mentioned the word "fear" because he was afraid of "committing mistakes because (he) had to put into practice what (he)I had learnt". He also added the notion of being prepared for teaching. He constantly mentioned during the different instruments the importance of teachers being "well-prepared" to face the classroom. When asked about this point in the last interview, he said that teaching in this program was not easy for him. He had been in Methodology lessons in which he had "taught" in controlled environments: peer teaching and the like. However, during the program he felt that teaching students 2 or 3 years younger than he would be a

challenge. He believed he had the “notion of teaching... the knowledge” but he did not know how to put it into practice. His attention on not being prepared comes from his experience during the assistantship program. He mentioned that “Students think the teacher knows everything because they asked issues that I did not know... it made me feel uncomfortable”. This point might reflect that teachers need to be well prepared which differs from his previous ideas of a good teacher.

Another issue that may have added to his pressure was that John he had been a student of mine, during his BA program, he knew I was implementing the program and piloting it. And of course, the experience was part of a research project. Both John and I were in a position in which we would have to be open to questioning about our teaching beliefs, decisions and practice. Nonetheless, John profited from the experience. He mentioned that being able to work side by side with an experienced teacher in an authentic environment provided them with the confidence to make decisions. “This type of program helped me because now I know that I have what it takes to be an English teacher... I feel more confident”. He also added that being able to question his and the teacher’s practice allowed him to be more aware of his capacities as a teacher.

When asked how he would switch on students’ brains and prepare them for learning, John answered “through stimulus such as extra points and rewards”. When asked the same question after the experience his response was quite different. John concerns differed from the pre-interview and questionnaire. He focused on two issues “interaction between the students” and his own performance “I have to be more prepared to become a good teacher also I have to be well organized”. The first concern seems to confirm his previous belief that students should practice what they learn. On the other hand, his attention on not being

prepared comes from his experience during the assistantship program. He mentioned that “Students think the teacher knows everything because they asked issues that I did not know... it made me feel uncomfortable”. This point might reflect that teachers need to be well prepared which differs from his previous ideas of a good teacher. In the first questionnaire he mentioned the importance of values as qualities of a good educator.

In conclusion, John experience in the teaching assistantship program proved to be fruitful for him. First, he was given exposure to a real classroom setting accompanied during the whole term by an experienced teacher. This companionship would allow John to have the support and a source of knowledge and ideas when in need to tackle classroom issues. This interaction would allow John, and even the in-service teacher, to question their beliefs regarding teaching. As noted in this section, John’s ideas about teaching were contested by real classroom interaction. He modified his ideas based on the experience and the collaboration with the teacher.

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Chapter 5: Conclusions

After presenting this current study and giving shape to the need to pursue its research in the first chapter. A description of the key literature regarding this investigation followed. The pertinent methodology to collect and analyze data from the participant appeared in chapter 3 and an analysis of the data in chapter four. This final chapter concludes this investigation by summarizing the key findings, the limitations of the study and a recommendation of possible scenarios for further research.

5.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the change in beliefs a preservice teacher after he experienced a teaching assistantship program mentored by an experienced in-service English teacher. This program differed in particular from previous experience the subject of the study had because of the number of hours and the length (a whole semester) of the program. At the time the study was conducted, the curriculum of the major in which the subject was enrolled, required students to have a limited number of teaching practice hours. After a focus group was held with a group of students in the last semester of the major in ELT, they agreed that their major concern was that they lacked practical teaching experience. This led to the implementation of this project in which a preservice teacher had to observe classes, assist the regular teacher, design and prepare teaching materials and tests for a whole semester. A much more prolonged time than that of his teaching practice lessons. Besides that, the subject with the help of the mentor had to make decisions which had a direct impact on how the class conducted. Therefore, based on the number of hours, the real context and the interaction with the experienced teacher a major effect on the participant's belief system was expected.

The study was part of the teaching assistantship program validation process. A means to determine its usefulness was to determine the impact it would have on the participant.

Therefore, by suggestion of this researcher's professor during his MA program the idea of understanding, describing and discovering differences in the beliefs system of a preservice student seem to be appropriate.

The need of the study

There were two reasons to investigate the belief system of preservice teachers. The first one is a professional, understanding how preservice teachers think and act within the classroom context is important because it is a window to the behind the scenes of his decision-making processes. As mentioned by Richards (1998), teachers carry out their practice in terms of "...beliefs or principles". Therefore, understanding preservice teachers' beliefs is vital because it can permeate into the design and implementation of programs in an ELT program.

The second reason had to do with a more personal agenda. At the time of the investigation, I was interested in what teachers did to be successful practitioners in the field and how experience as a preservice teacher helped them. My interest was the underlying notions behind successful language lessons. I wondered if experienced teachers could shape the beliefs of an inexperienced teacher as master craftsmen did with apprentices. Having a mentor in a real classroom situation would, as the study proved it, shape the novice's performance. I wanted to know what the underlying construct was that allowed teacher carry a good practice and whether it was possible to inoculate this same construct into preservice teachers.

5.2 Discussion of key findings

According to Fivesa and Buehl (2008), preservice teachers have naïve thoughts about the teaching practice. Before the experience, the subject of the study thought teaching practice was “just about standing up in front of the classroom”. After the experience, John’s transition was evident because he was aware of the need to be more prepared, one may infer he referred to language knowledge, structure and vocabulary. Another key characteristic of preservice teacher is that they tend to overlook error correction. At the beginning of the study John, seem to do so; however, this may have happened because at the time of this investigation he was still a student and he was developing his skills in English. Due to this fact, he overlooked actual errors students made because he was not really aware of their occurrence. After different sessions, he was more conscious about error correction as a teaching strategy. During the last interview, John mentioned that he felt the pressure to perform well and that he might have overexaggerated when correcting students. When asked how he conceived errors after the teaching assistantship program, John mentioned that mistakes are part of the process and that sometimes it is acceptable to let some faulty production go during classes as not to pressure students

Preservice teacher previous experience as language learners shape preservice teachers’ beliefs. Bailey (1996) as mentioned in Borg (2006) that language learning experiences have an effect in shaping teaching philosophies, in other words beliefs. John mentioned in different occasions that he wanted to give back what he had received as a student. He constantly praised a teacher he had in Elementary school in the USA. As a college student he also modeled his teaching after different teachers he liked. Eventhough

John did not change his belief about his previous teachers' good practices. He felt at one point of the experience that he was turning into the teachers he disliked as a student.

Other two areas in which there was a salient transition was on his approach to teaching. At first John prepared classes thinking of a "day-to-day" activity. During that experience he realized that he had to focus on a whole semester. And the other area was, teacher-student rapport. At the beginning of the experience he wanted to have an amicable relationship with students, this might have been possible because of the age of his students. He was just two years older than most of them. At the end of the experience he switched from being a friendly teacher to one that provided a "comfortable environment in which students feel comfortable... (to participate and learn)".

Finally, a key change in his belief system was self-confidence. During the experience he felt he had the knowledge or recipe book to teach. However, his ideas were challenged by real-classroom experience. He was chosen for this program because of his high English level and because he had attended most of his Teaching Methodology classes. However, once in the experience, he noticed he lacked vocabulary, the grammar and the Pragmatic knowledge of the language. During the experience, he mentioned that he felt that he had the "notion of teaching... the knowledge" but he did not know how to put it into practice. His attention on not being prepared came from his experience during the assistantship program. He mentioned that "Students think the teacher knows everything because they asked issues that I did not know... it made me feel uncomfortable".

5.3 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of the study is the amount of information gathered. There were two questionnaires prior and after the experience and also there were two follow-up interviews. However, the original intent was also to keep a log in which the preservice student would write his reflection after each class. After only 2 weeks, the original intent was doomed due both the experienced teacher and the preservice teacher's workload. Another planned instrument was to record after class meetings but again time constraint and workload did not allow the filming of the meetings. Another limitation of the study could affect its validity: this researcher was also the implementer of the teaching assistantship program and the mentor of the preservice teacher. There was an open call for other teachers to take on the preservice teacher; however, due to their schedules and limited time to meet the participant no other teacher was able to participate as the experienced mentor teacher.

5.4 Directions for further study

Grammar: the subject of the study continuously expressed how he needed more knowledge and preparation on the use of grammar. After the experience, he expressed that teaching classes in a higher level of student teachers demanded that he too understood language in a different and deeper way. A possible complementary study could be to describe the impact mentoring a preservice teacher has on the in-service teacher beliefs' system after experiencing the same assistantship program. The interaction this researcher had with the apprentice lead to questioning my own teaching practice and my own beliefs' system.

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Appendix One

1st Questionnaire

The following is a take-home questionnaire which will reflect your beliefs regarding language teaching and learning. There are no right or wrong answers since they reflect your own ideas or beliefs regarding teaching. The purpose of this questionnaire is to help me gather data for my thesis. Your name will remain confidential.

Please write in detail.

1. What has influenced you to become an English teacher?
2. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a good English language teacher?
3. What are the elements of a good and efficient language lesson?
4. How important is the use of materials for language teaching?
5. How would you motivate your students to learn English?
6. How important is it to develop confidence and friendship between teachers and students?
7. What are five issues that interest you regarding teaching and learning?

Appendix Two

Critical Moment Reflection

The following exercise is part of my research thus I will really appreciate all your answers. Feel free to write in Spanish at any moment if it makes you feel more comfortable. Please, think of your practice during the teaching assistantship program and reflect on your experience. Write, as much as you can, about a critical moment you went through during your experience and how you managed to overcome it.

Appendix Three

Final Interview after the Experience

In your opinion, what are the characteristics of good teaching?

What are the elements of an effective lesson?

Was there a difference between what you thought teaching was about and the actual experience?

Was there a situation during the experience that made you change the way you believed about teaching?

Now that you have experienced real teaching, what are the issues that interest or concern you?